(b) if so, the details of the cases of misuse of DEPB that have come to light in the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) the action taken by the Government against the guilty exporters?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Although there have been some instances of misuse of DEPB scheme, it would not be correct to take the view that the scheme is greatly being misued by the exporters. Various steps have already been taken in consultation with Ministry of Finance to prevent scope of misuse of the scheme. Details of the measures taken for checking misuse include (i) value cap on items which have a DEPB rate of 15% or more; (ii) introduction of Present market Value (PMV) assessment system; (iii) Verification of Shipping Bills before credit is used to clear import consignments; (iv) Scaling down of DEPB rates on number of items. In cases of fraud, suppression of facts or misrepresentation penal action is initiated jointly by DRI & Directorate General of Foreign Trade. Investigations have been initiated against 38 firms. 13 persons have been arrested and penalties and fines have been imposed in two cases.

श्रीलंका से शुल्क मुक्त माल का आयात

2962. **श्री खान गुफ़रान जाहिदी:** क्या वाणिज्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार ने श्रीलंका से चाय, रबर व नारियल को शुल्क मुक्त आयात को अनुमति न देने का निर्णय लिया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या वे वस्तुएं भारत व श्रीलंका के बीच हुए ऐतिहासिक मुक्त व्यापार समझौते में शामिल हैं; और

(ग) इन वस्तुओं को समझौते से बाहर रखने के क्या कारण हैं?

वाणिज्य मंत्री (श्री रामकृष्ण हेगड़े): (क) से (ग) भारत और श्रीलंका के बीच मुक्त व्यापार करार के उपबंधों के तहत दोनों देशों को उन वस्तुओं की सूची का आदान-प्रदान करना होगा जिन पर टैरिफ अधिमान उपलब्ध होंगे तथा जिन वस्तुओं पर टैरिफ अधिमान उपलब्ध नहीं होंगे ये सूचियां तैयार की जा रही हैं। सूचियां तैयार करते समय विभिन्न मंत्रालयों, राज्य सरकारों, उद्योग तथा व्यापार संघों आदि की चिन्ताओं पर समुचित विचार किया गया है।

VRS in Coffee Board

2963. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many employees and officers of the Coffee Board in Groups I,B,C, and D have been relieved under the V.R.S. since 1995-96;

(b) whether all those who opted the VRS have received pension, gratuity, ex-gratia, leave salary etc. due to them; and

(c) if not, the reasons and group-wise details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) A total number of 1684 officials comprising 12 Group A, 100 Group B, 945 Group C & 627 Group D have been relieved under Voluntary Retirement Scheme since 1995-96.

(b) and (c) The settlement of pension, gratuity, ex-gratia and leave salary for all the officials who have availed of Voluntary Retirement Schemes has been effected in full.

Decline in Exports to Traditional Markets

2964. SHRI S. PETER ALPHONSE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Exports have declined during 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(b) whether it is also a fact that exports to some of our traditional markets

like the U.K., Germany, Nepal, Singapore, Russia have suffered a steep decline; and

(c) the immediate steps taken to arrest the declining trend?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) As per the provisional DGCI&S data Indian exports during April-February 1998-99 after taking into consideration late returns, registered a growth of 56% in US $ terms over the corresponding period last year.

(b) As per the provisional Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and statistics (DGCI&S) data the change in the rate of export growth in US $ terms, during April-January 1998 as compared to the same period last year is as under:—

Country	%age change
U.K.	—12.52
Germany	— 0.17
Nepal	—27.39
Singapore	—35.68
Russia	—23.40

(c) The deceleration of exports is mainly due to South East Asian crisis and world wide recession. A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include lowering of interest rates on export credit, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identifiction of thrust sectors and focus regions. The Government is also initiating action through several measures to facilitate investment in sectors with strong export potential, encourage diversification of India's export basket, address infrastructure short comings, improve export facilitation measures and thus enhance the overall competitiveness of Indian exports.

The Government is according high priority to exports and all necessary steps are being taken to put exports on high growth trajectory.

Sector-wise Export

2965. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state: (a) whether Government have reviewed that sectoral and State-wise export performance for 1998-99 vis-à-vis previous two years:

(b) if so, the details of emerging trends by broad indicators particularly for agro-sector;

(c) the details of major policy initiatives/incentives export package formulated for 1999-2000 for various sectors alongwith the targets/projections; and

(d) the reasons for sluggish export performance during the last two years and revival plans?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) As per the provisional data India's sectoral export performance including agricultural sector during April-January, 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 are as under:

Sector-wise details of exports for April-January

US $ Million

Commodities	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Plantations	557	688	756
Argi. & Allied Products	3722	3377	3224
Marine Products	949	1003	884
Ores & Minerals	922	870	692
Leather & Manufactures	1338	1251	1297
Gems & Jewallery	3842	3973	4523
Sports Goods	66	64	59
Chemicals & related products	3334	3637	3362
Engineering goods	3162	3453	3061
Electronics (Hardware)	659	614	386